



ERNS and CERCLA

Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) Fact Sheet

Office of Emergency and Remedial Response
Emergency Response Division 5202G

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

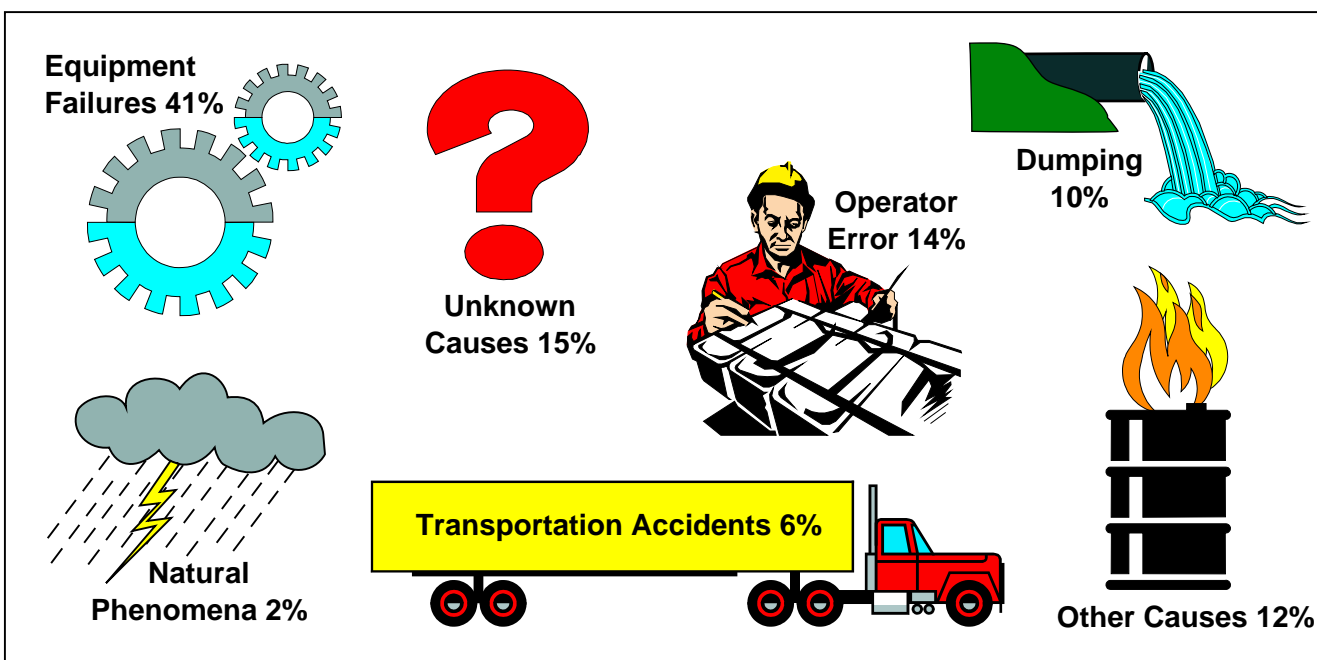
What is ERNS?

The Emergency Response Notification System (ERNS) is a computer database containing information on reports of oil and hazardous substance releases that have occurred throughout the United States and have been reported to the National Response Center (NRC), the ten EPA Regions, or the U.S. Coast Guard. The initial notification data may be updated with information from various Federal, State, and local response authorities as appropriate. ERNS data can be used to analyze reports of releases, support emergency planning efforts, and assist decision makers in developing spill prevention programs.

What is a CERCLA Hazardous Substance?

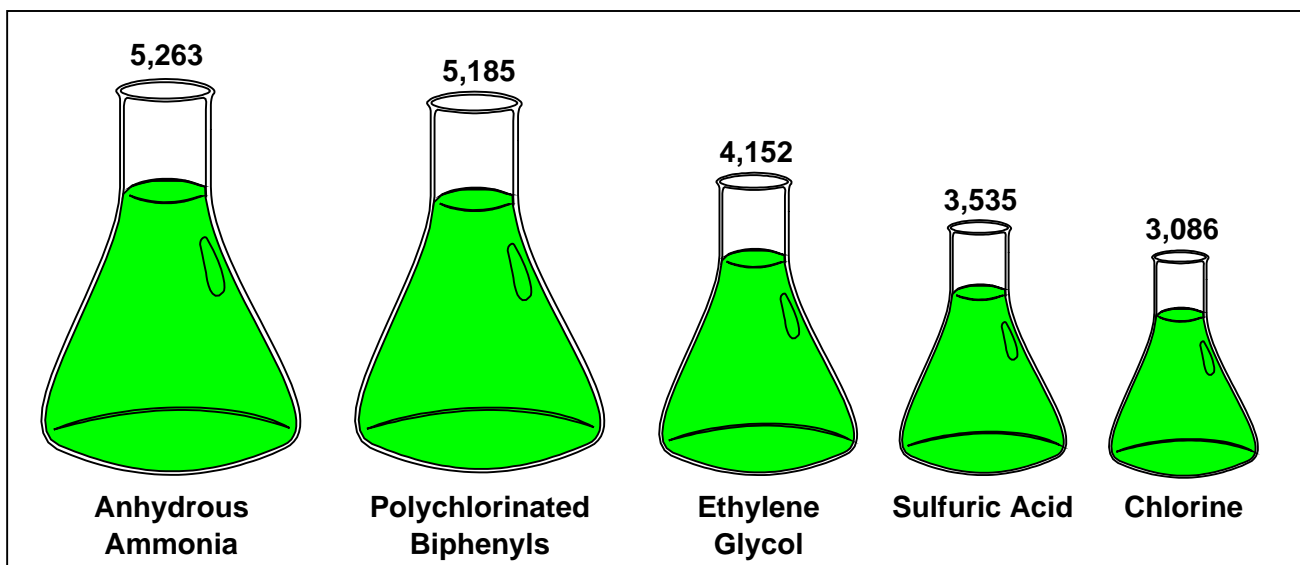
Chemicals defined under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) are considered to be hazardous substances. EPA assigns each CERCLA hazardous substance a reportable quantity (RQ) that defines when a release must be reported to the NRC. The RQ for a hazardous substance is determined based on the intrinsic physical, chemical, and toxicological properties of the substance, including aquatic and mammalian toxicity, ignitability, and reactivity. CERCLA substances account for on average 19 percent of the total number of reports in ERNS.

Causes of CERCLA Hazardous Substance Reports (1987-1994)*



*These percentages are based on only those notifications which have a cause designated. Approximately 33% of the notifications in ERNS have an associated cause.

ERNS Top Five CERCLA Hazardous Substances Reported (1987-1994)



Why Report a Release?

Failing to report a release of a CERCLA hazardous substance that equals or exceeds its RQ, or submitting false or misleading information, are violations of the law. The U.S. EPA can impose criminal penalties and/or levy fines for such offenses. In addition to reporting violations, an owner or operator of a vessel or facility is liable for all costs of assessment and repair of damages to natural resources, cleanup costs, and the costs of any health study resulting from a release of a CERCLA hazardous substance. Even if the release is not subject to the notification requirements of CERCLA; that is, even if the release is less than the applicable RQ, the owner or the operator of the facility may still be liable.



**When in doubt,
call the NRC !
1-800-424-8802**

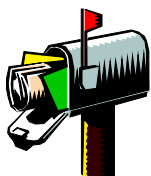
What Happens After a Release is Reported?

Release information is incorporated into ERNS and is given to the appropriate Regional EPA or U.S. Coast Guard On-Scene Coordinator. This information may also be given to other organizations, for example:

- State environmental agencies
- Department of Transportation
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Department of Defense
- Department of Energy
- Chemical Transportation Emergency Center
- Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
- Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration

Obtaining ERNS Data

Additional information on the ERNS database may be obtained by calling the ERNS Information Line at (202) 260-2342, by sending an e-mail request to erns.info@epamail.epa.gov, or by writing to EPA at the following address:



ERNS Manager
U.S. EPA
Mail Code 5202G
401 M Street SW
Washington, DC 20460



ERNS data are also available through the Internet at the following addresses:

World Wide Web: <http://www.epa.gov/ERNS>
EPA Gopher Server: gopher.epa.gov
FTP Server: ftp.epa.gov/pub/gopher/ERNS